

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 5972

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: MILI, PO

SUBJ: PROPOSALS OF PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE (PAF)

SUMMARY: BG CORBAL APPROACHED THE DATT ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE CHIEF OF STAFF, PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE, TO PROPOSE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ACTIONS "TO ENSURE THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF THE PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE." THE KEY ACTION BY THE USG WOULD BE TO SWAP 6 7 AF C-130E'S FOR 2 PAF 707'S. THIS WOULD GIVE THE PAF A MISSION AND ENABLE THEM TO OPPOSE COSTA GOMES' EFFORTS TO DO AWAY WITH THE PAF AS A SEPARATE SERVICE. END SUMMARY.

1. BG CORBAL VISITED WITH THE DATT IN THE US EMBASSY AT 0830 HOURS 8 OCT 75 TO MAKE TWO SPECIFIC REQUESTS FOR USG ASSISTANCE, AND TO DISCUSS IN DETAIL THE FUTURE OF THE PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE AND THE NEED FOR OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE IF IT IS TO CONTINUE AS A SEPARATE SERVICE.

2. THE FIRST REQUEST IS TO MOVE TWO PUMA HELICOPTERS FROM PORTELLA AIRPORT, LISBON, TO LAJES AB AZORES VIA C-130 OR C-141 AIRCRAFT, IN EARLY 1976. CORBAL SAID THAT THE AIR FORCE PROPOSES TO STATION UP TO SIX PUMA HELICOPTERS IN THE AZORES FOR TWO REASONS: ONE, TO DEVISE A MISSION FOR THE AIR FORCE IN THE ISLANDS, AND, TWO, TO INDICATE TO AZOREANS THAT THE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT HAS A CONTINUING INTEREST IN SUPPORTING THE

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ISLAND WITH RESOURCES FROM THE MAINLAND. HE EXPLAINED THAT

POLITICALLY THIS WOULD TEND TO RESPOND TO AZOREAN ACCUSATIONS THAT THE MAINLAND HAS ABANDONED THE ISLANDS. OF GREATER IMPORTANCE TO THE PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE IS THE FACT THAT IT WOULD SERVE TO CREATE A PEACETIME MISSION HAULING MEDICAL SUPPLIES, HIGH PRIORITY CARGO, AND SERIOUSLY INJURED PATIENTS FROM REMOTE LOCATIONS TO MEDICAL FACILITIES WITHIN THE ISLANDS.

3. THE SECOND REQUEST IS MORE FAR-REACHING AND GOES DIRECTLY TO THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM OF THE PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE. THE PAF CURRENTLY POSSESSES TWO BOEING 707 AIRCRAFT VALUED ON THE OPEN MARKET AT ABOUT 8 MILLION DOLLARS APIECE. AFTER THE DECOLONIZATION OF ANGOLA IS COMPLETED ON 11 NOV 75, THERE WILL BE NO VALID REASON FOR THE AIR FORCE TO RETAIN THESE AIRCRAFT.

4. CORBAL SAID THAT GEN MORAIS DA SILVA, AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF, WOULD LIKE TO SELL THEM AND USE THE MONEY TO BUY A MORE VERSATILE AIRPLANE LIKE THE C-130. BUT HE DARE NOT RAISE THAT AS A PROPOSAL WITHIN THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL BECAUSE PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES HAS ALREADY VOICED HIS OPINION THAT PORTUGAL DID NOT NEED A SEPARATE AIR FORCE AND MORAIS DA SILVA IS CONVINCED THAT GIVEN THE ECONOMIC STRAITS OF THE GOVERNMENT HE WOULD BE FORCED TO SURRENDER THE SALE PRICE OF THE AIRCRAFT TO THE NATIONAL TREASURY WITH NO HOPE OF REPLACING THE AIRCRAFT. CORBAL EXPLAINED QUITE CANDIDLY THAT FOR SOME TIME THERE HAS BEEN A MOVE, SUPPORTED BY THE LEFTISTS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT, TO DO AWAY WITH THE AIR FORCE AS A SEPARATE SERVICE PRIMARILY BECAUSE IT IS THE MOST CONSERVATIVE OF THE SERVICES. CORBAL POINTED OUT THAT IT WAS THE STAND TAKEN BY MORAIS DA SILVA WHICH TOPPLED THE GONCALVES GOVERNMENT.

5. MORAIS DA SILVA AND HIS STAFF HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE ONLY WAY THEY CAN PRESERVE THE AIR FORCE IS TO CONSTRUCT A VIABLE MISSION AND PRESENT THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL WITH AN ATTRACTIVE PROPOSAL THAT WILL ENABLE HIM TO DISPOSE OF THE 707'S AND OBTAIN SUBSTITUTE CARGO AIRCRAFT.

6. MORAIS DA SILVA SUGGESTS AN AIR FORCE TO AIR FORCE SWAP OF THE TWO 707'S FOR 6 USAF C-130E' (THEY WOULD ACCEPT 4 C-130'S IF NECESSARY). THE AIRCRAFT NEED NOT BE NEW, JUST LINE C-130'S IN TRANSFER CONDITION. NATURALLY THEY WOULD EXPECT TO TRANSFER THE CONFIDENTIAL

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SUPPORT KITS WITH SPARES AND MAINTENANCE EQUIPMENT AS WELL AS THE AIRCRAFT.

7. IN ORDER TO PUSH THROUGH SUCH A DEAL, THE UNDERSTANDING WITH THE USG WOULD HAVE TO BE SUFFICIENTLY CONCRETE SO THAT MORAIS DA SILVA COULD TABLE A STUDY, WHICH HIS STAFF IS NOW PREPARING, IN SUPPORT OF THE EXCHANGE AND A LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION TO PROCEED WITH THE EXCHANGE, FOR SIGNATURE. IN EFFECT, HE WANTS TO BE

ABLE TO SAY USAF AND PAF HAVE REACHED AN AGREEMENT WHEREBY THE ONLY THING LACKING IS THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL APPROVAL. UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES HE BELIEVES HE COULD OVERRIDE THE BOJECTIONS OF THE LEFTIST AND IN ONE STROKE GUARANTEE THE CONTINUATION OF THE AIR FORCE AS A SEPARATE SERVICE AND A NEW MISSION, I.E. SUPPORT OF THE OFFSHORE ISLANDS, FOR THE AIR FORCE.

8. MORAIS DA SILVA HAS NO ILLUSIONS THAT SUCH A SWAP WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE U.S. AIR FORCE. CORBAL READILY AGREES THAT WE PROBABLY DON'T NEED THEIR 707S BUT THEY HOPE THAT WE WILL UNDERSTAND THE POLITICAL IMPERATIVES INVOLVED. AN ADDITIONAL FACTOR IN WANTING TO ARRIVE AT THIS AGREEMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IS THE ONGOING TAP (PORTUGUESE NATIONAL AIRLINE) FISCAL STUDY WHICH THEY ARE CONVINCED WILL SHOW TAP TO BE ALMOST BANKRUPT AND WITH TOO MANY AIRCRAFT FOR ITS POTENTIAL BUSINESS. MORAIS DA SILVA EXPECTS TAP TO PROPOSE SELLING SOME OF ITS OWN EQUIPMENT ON THE OPEN MARKET AND TAKING OVER THE 707'S OF THE AIR FORCE WHICH ARE CONFIGURED FOR BOTH FREIGHT AND PASSENGERS, SHOULD TAP MAKE THE SUGGESTION, THE AIR FORCE IS CONVIN CED THAT IT WOULD BE APPROVED BY COSTA GOMES AND USED AS A REASON TO DISESTABLISH THE AIR FORCE.

9. CORBAL SAID THAT HE WOULD MAKE AVAILABLE TO THE DATT A COPY OF THEIR ONGOING MISSION STUDY AS SOON AS IT IS COMPLETZD IF IT WOULD BE USEFUL AS A MEANS FOR PURSUING THE NEGOTIATIONS.

10. SHOULD THERE BE NO HOPE FOR CONSUMMATING SUCH A DEAL OR IF THE USG BELIEVED IT MORE FEASILBE TO WORK WITHIN A NATO FRAMEWORK, AN ALTERNATIVE ACCEPTABLE TO THE PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE WOULD BE A SWAP FOR SIX GERMAN TRANSALL AIRCRAFT (A TWIN ENGINE CARGO AIRCRAFT WITH ROUGHLY THE SAME FLIGHT CHARACTERISTICS AS THE C-130 BUT WITH A SMALLER CARGO CAPABILITY).

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11. DATT HEARD CORBAL OUT, AGREED TO FORWARD THE PROPOSAL THROUGH APPROPRIATE CHANNELS AND PROVIDE MORAIS DA SILVIA WITH AN ANSWER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

COMMENT: EMBASSY BELIEVES MORAIS DA SILVA'S PROPOSAL IS WORTH LOOKING INTO. THE AIR FORCE IS THE MOST CONSERVATIVE OF PORTUGAL'S ARMED SERVICES. ANYTHING WE CAN REASONABLY DO TO MAINTAIN ITS ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS WOULD BE IN OUR INTEREST. IT WOULD ALSO BE IN OUR INTEREST TO DEMONSTRATE OUR SUPPORT OF THE CONCEPTS OF MISSION AND PROFESSIONALISM, BOTH OF WHICH ARE UNDER ATTACK BY THE LEFT. IF THE PAF CEASES TO EXIST AS AN ENTITY THE LEFT WILL HAVE SCORED A VERY SIGNIFICANT VICTORY WHICH GOES RIGHT TO THE HEART OF MODERATE STRENGTH. WE RECOGNIZE THIS IS A COMPLICATED PROPOSAL WITH MANY WASHINGTON RAMIFICATIONS

BUT WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING GUIDANCE ASAP.  
CARLUCCI

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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